

Aztec Ruins National Monument

New Mexico

The Project

Aztec Ruins National Monument, in the town of Aztec in northwestern New Mexico, is an archeological site and was a significant outlier settlement affiliated with the Chacoan Anasazi of Chaco Canyon in the 11th century. The monument was designated as a world heritage site in 1987. The 1989 *General Management Plan/Development Concept Plan* outlines actions necessary over the next 10 to 15 years for protecting the monument's resources, providing efficient management of the monument, and promoting visitor understanding and enjoyment.

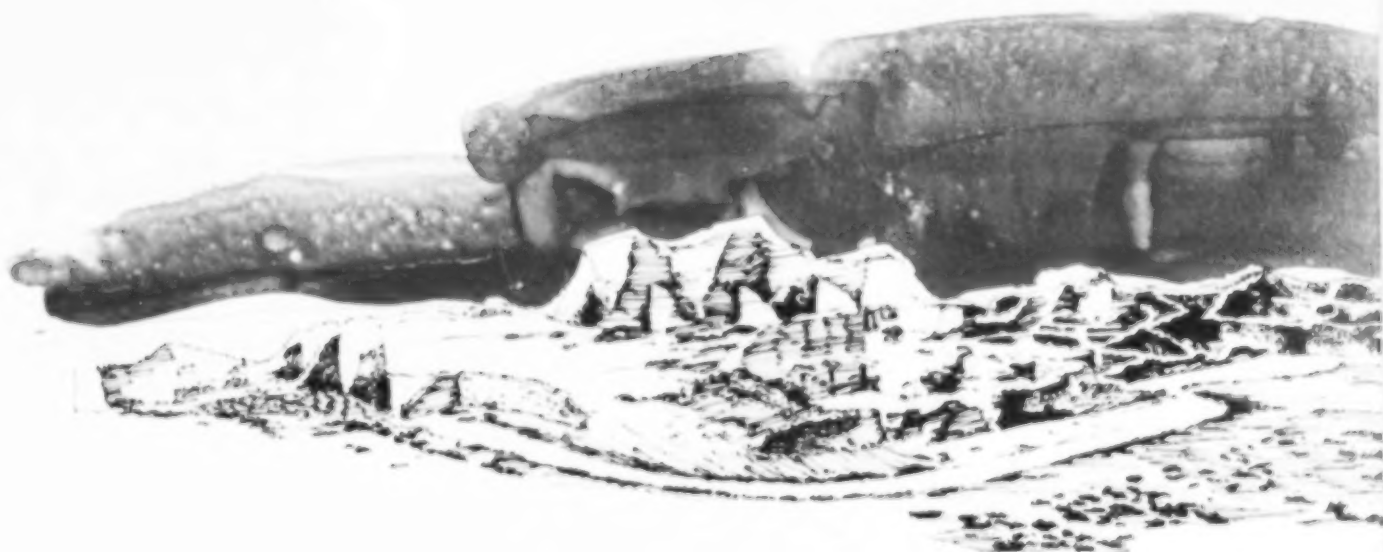
The Issues

Several issues were affecting archeological resources, monument management, and the visitor experience. The monument was being surrounded by residential and commercial development, including oil and gas operations. Another concern was the deterioration of the ruins, caused by erosion, overirrigation of adjacent farmlands, and a unlined canal that traverses the monument. There were archeological resources outside the monument that were vulnerable to vandalism; these were sites of tremendous research/interpretive potential. Finally, the visitor center and parking area were too small to accommodate increasing visitation and monument staff needs.

The Plan

Congress established a boundary that expanded the monument from 27 acres to 320 acres. The new lands were selected based on recommendations by the National Park Service planning team and would enable the Park Service to restrict additional infringements on monument resources.

Other benefits of the plan and boundary expansion are that the Park Service will be able to control nearby overirrigation that has caused deterioration of the ancient pueblo ruins. Archeological resources that were previously outside the monument and that have been determined by archeologists to be directly related to the original monument ruins may be acquired, protected, and interpreted. The visitor center will undergo interior alterations that will make it more efficient for visitor use. A new staff headquarters building will be constructed adjacent to the visitor center, and another parking area will be constructed for recreational vehicles and cars. All other support facilities will be relocated near the headquarters building to form a centralized operational complex - in contrast to the current situation where facilities and roads are scattered across the monument. This new configuration will help protect archeological resources and enhance the visual and interpretive quality of the visitor experience.



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